CLARK FORK COALITION

Senate Finance and Claims Committee
Bales, Keith (R) (Ch)
Lewis, Dave (R) (V Ch)
Barkus, Gregory (R)
Barrett, Debby (R)
Brenden, John (R)
Brueggeman, John (R)
Cooney, Mike (D)
Esp, John (R)
Gallus, Steve (D)
Hansen, Ken (D)
Hawks, Bob (D)
Laible, Rick (R)
Peterson, Jim (R)
Ripley, Rick (R)
Schmidt, Trudi (D)
Tropila, Mitch (D)
Wanzenried, David (D)
Williams, Carol (D)
Zinke, Ryan (R)
Staff: Taryn Purdy

March 9, 2009

Dear Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony on SB 303. The Clark Fork Coalition represents 1,500 members who live, work, and play in the 22,000 square-mile Clark Fork River watershed. Our goal is to create healthy, thriving rivers and communities in western Montana. To meet this goal, **we fully endorse cooperative, citizen-based water planning in our state's large river basins, and urge you to pass this bill out of committee.**

Updating the state water plan regularly is essential to protecting Montana's treasured water resources. This bill clarifies that each distinct basin in Montana must carefully consider the ground and surface water used, as well as consider the future needs and demands for all types of water users—these include communities, agriculture, hydropower and other industries, and fish and wildlife.

By using voluntary councils (such as the existing Clark Fork Task Force of which the Coalition is member) instead of solely state department staff, the proposed water planning process will allow crucial citizen dialogue and valuable local input into how we manage, monitor, and allocate our liquid gold. The Clark Fork Coalition supports SB 303 and hopes you will, too.

Thank you for your time, and your attention to protecting this state's "ribbons of life:" our rivers and streams. Please feel free to contact us with any questions or concerns on SB 303.

Sincerely,

Brianna Randall
Water Policy Director

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